

Rethinking Cat Management Strategies

What is the **animal shelter's** role?

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Historical pathways



Return to owner

Adoption

Humane euthanasia

Suffering, painful death
and/or causing
unacceptable problems or
risks out in the community

California law and policy

- No statewide requirement for healthy cat management
- Services should be provided for injured/sick/pets in imminent danger
- IF stray cats are impounded, law states “no cat shall be killed before 72 hours”
- State policy states that no adoptable or treatable animal should be euthanized

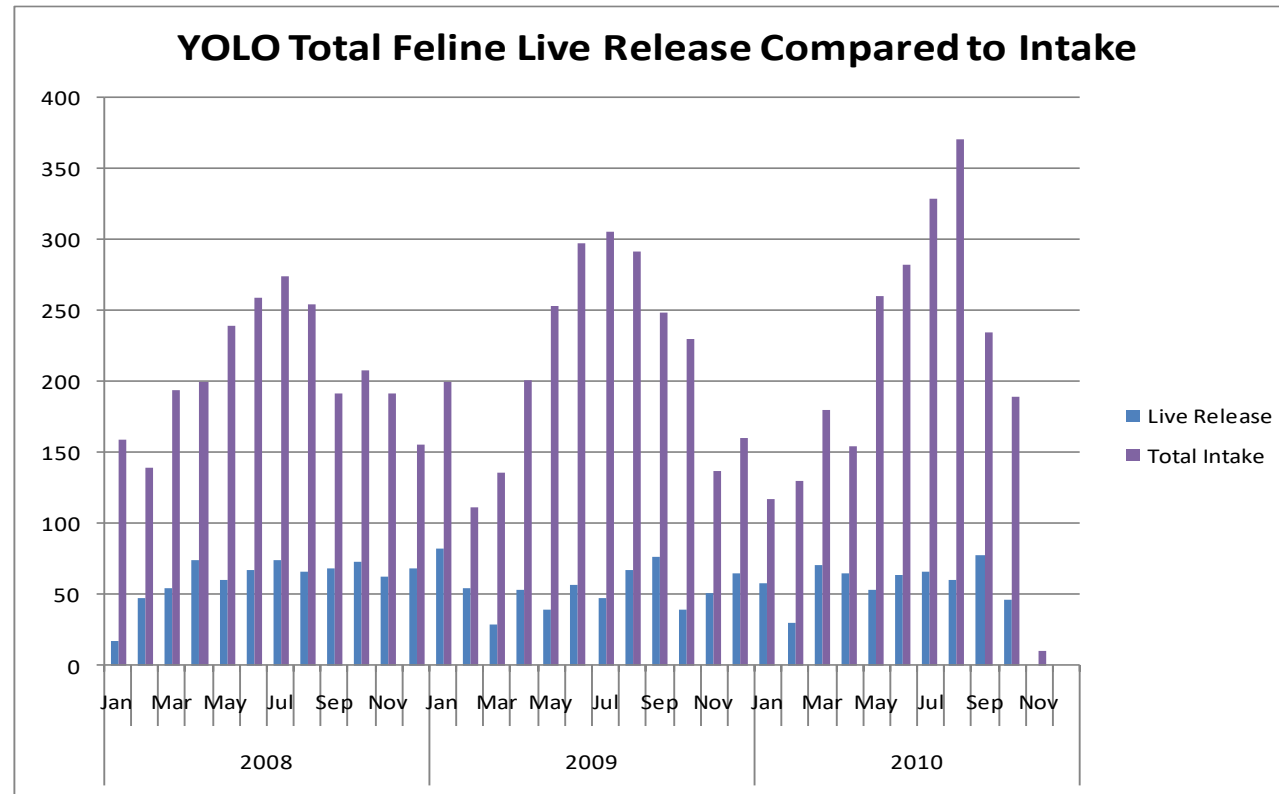
In 1998, SB 1785 was enacted, including:

SEC. 5. Section 1834.4 is added to the Civil Code, to read:

1834.4. (a) It is the policy of the state that no adoptable animal should be euthanized if it can be adopted into a suitable home. Adoptable animals include only those animals eight weeks of age or older that, at or subsequent to the time the animal is impounded or otherwise taken into possession, have manifested no sign of a behavioral or temperamental defect that could pose a health or safety risk or otherwise make the animal unsuitable for placement as a pet, and have manifested no sign of disease, injury, or congenital or hereditary condition that adversely affects the health of the animal or that is likely to adversely affect the animal's health in the future.

(b) It is the policy of the state that no treatable animal should be euthanized. A treatable animal shall include any animal that is not adoptable but that could become adoptable with reasonable efforts. This subdivision, by itself, shall not be the basis of liability for damages regarding euthanasia.

Historic approach



MILLIONS OF CATS



Cats in the U.S.

- 74M – 86M pet cats
 - ~ 60% indoors
 - > 80% spayed/neutered
 - Target of traditional shelter model
- 30K – 80M community cats
 - 100% outdoors
 - < 5% in “colonies” (visible groups)

A different approach

Cats: San Jose shelter spays, releases strays

SAN JOSE

Carolyn Jones, Chronicle Staff Writer Published 4:00 am PST, Tuesday, January 3, 2012



Photo: John Sebastian Russo, Special To The Chronicle



San Jose's animal shelter is among the first in the country to try a new approach to dealing with feral and stray cats. Instead of euthanizing those that aren't adoptable, the shelter spays or neuters them and releases them back to the vacant lot or back alley from which they came.

(The shelter director) said the shelter and Audubon Society ultimately have the same goal: to see fewer feral and stray cats in the world.

It worked!

**Study of the effect on shelter cat intakes
and euthanasia from a shelter neuter
return project of 10,080 cats from March
2010 to June 2014**

Karen L. Johnson¹ and Jon Cicirelli²

¹ National Pet Alliance, San Jose, CA, United States

² San Jose Animal Care and Services, San Jose, CA, United States

- Euthanasia **down 75%**
- Euthanasia due to URI **down 99%**
- Cats picked up dead **down 20%**
- Intake (cat and kitten) **down 29%**

New pathway



Return to owner

Adoption

TNR/community cat programs

Humane euthanasia

Suffering and/or causing unacceptable problems or risks out in the community

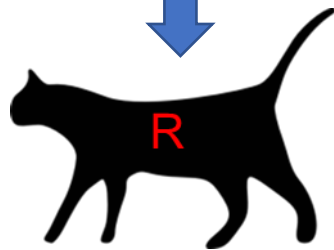
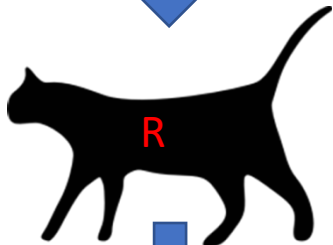
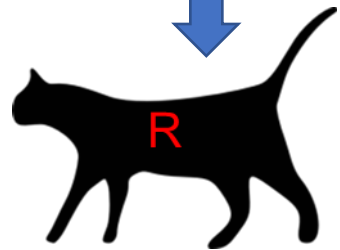
Community cat programs

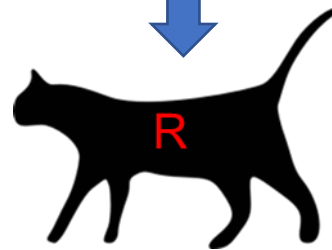
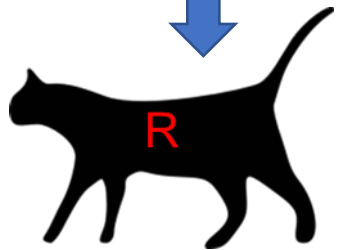
- Shelter, private group or partnership
- Healthy adult cats (+/- older kittens) without evidence of ownership
- Bypass traditional shelter impoundment
- Sterilize, vaccinate, ear tip and return to location found to the extent possible
- Provide resources and information for humane coexistence

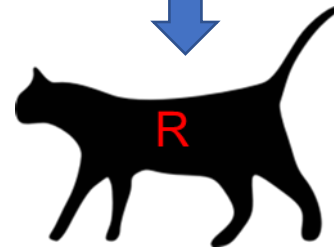
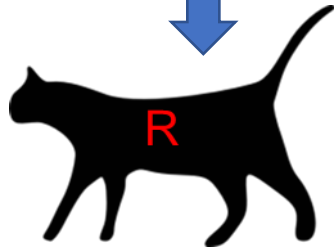


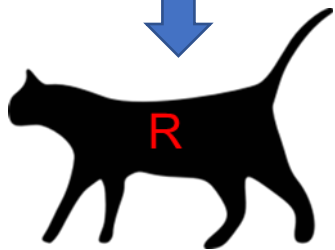
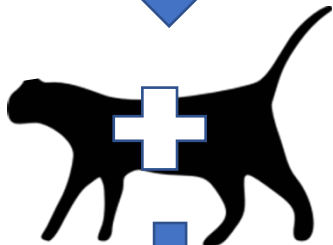
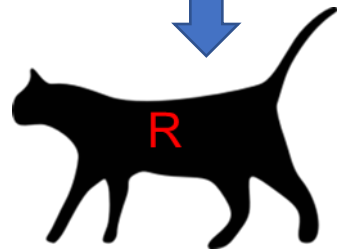
Community/Feral Cats

Our Community Cat Program helps manage and care for feral and free roaming cats.









The harm of removal

Effects of low-level culling of feral cats in open populations: a case study from the forests of southern Tasmania

Billie T. Lazenby^{A,B,D}, Nicholas J. Mooney^C and Christopher R. Dickman^A

^ASchool of Biological Sciences, A08, University of Tasmania

^BDepartment of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Wildlife, Hobart, Tas. 7000, Australia.

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“Contrary to expectation, the relative abundance and activity of feral cats increased in the cull-sites, even though the numbers of cats captured per unit effort during the culling period declined. **Increases in minimum numbers of cats known to be alive ranged from 75% to 211% during the culling period, compared with pre- and post-cull estimates.**”

What about
friendly cats?



Remember this?



Return to owner

Adoption

Humane euthanasia

Suffering, painful death
and/or causing
unacceptable problems or
risks out in the community

Important difference between cats and dogs

Fewer than 1 in 10 cats recovered by a call or visit to a shelter

Search and identification methods that owners use to find a lost cat

Linda K. Lord, DVM, PhD; Thomas E. Wittum, PhD; Amy K. Ferketich, PhD; Julie A. Funk, DVM, PhD; Päivi J. Rajala-Schultz, DVM, PhD

Objective—To characterize the process by which owners search for lost cats and identify factors associated with time to recovery.

Design—Cross-sectional study.

Sample Population—Owners of 138 cats lost in Montgomery County, Ohio, between June 1 and September 30, 2005.

Procedures—A telephone survey was conducted.

Results—73 of the 138 (53%) cats were recovered; median time to recovery was 5 days (range, 0.5 to 81 days). Most cats (48 [66%]) that were recovered returned home on their own or were found in the neighborhood (5 [7%]); most other cats were recovered through posting of neighborhood signs (8 [11%]) or calling or visiting an animal agency (5 [7%]). The highest success rate for any of the search methods that were used was only 12% (posting neighborhood signs). Only 26 of the 138 (19%) cats had some type of identification at the time they were lost (ie, identification tag, rabies tag, or microchip). Owners allowed 82 (59%) cats to spend at least some time outdoors. The percentage of sexually intact cats recovered by their owners (4/16 [25%]) was significantly lower than the percentage of neutered cats recovered (69/122 [57%]).

Conclusions and Clinical Relevance—Results suggest that the percentage of lost cats recovered by their owners is low, possibly in part because of the lack of use of traditional identification methods and the general acceptance that cats may roam. Veterinarians can help educate owners about the importance of identification and the need to keep cats indoors. (*J Am Vet Med Assoc* 2007;230:217–220)

Cats have surpassed dogs as the most popular pet in the United States, with American households owning an estimated 72 million cats in 2002.¹ Even more so than dogs, cats that stray from their homes are at risk for injury and death. Given the emotional attachment that many owners have to their pets, having a cat stray from its home may be particularly stressful to the owner.

Various methods have been used to reunite stray cats with their owners (eg, identification tags and microchips) or to recover cats that have strayed (eg, placing an advertisement in the newspaper, posting signs in the neighborhood, and contacting local animal shelters). However, the effectiveness of these various methods in the recovery of lost cats has not been evaluated. The purposes of the study reported here, therefore, were to characterize the process by which owners search for lost cats and identify factors associated with time to recovery. The present study was performed at the same time as a similar study² of the methods owners use to search for lost dogs.

From the Department of Veterinary Preventive Medicine, College of Veterinary Medicine (Lord, Wittum, Rajala-Schultz), and School of Public Health (Ferketich), The Ohio State University, Columbus, OH 43210; and the National Food Safety and Toxicology Center, 165 Food Safety and Toxicology Building, East Lansing, MI 48824-1302 (Funk).

Supported by the Kenneth A. Scott Charitable Trust, a KeyBank Trust.

Presented in part at the Conference of Research Workers in Animal Diseases Annual Meeting, St Louis, December 2005.

Address correspondence to Dr. Lord.

More than 1 in 3 dogs recovered by a call or visit to a shelter

Search and identification methods that owners use to find a lost dog

L. K. Lord, DVM, PhD; Thomas E. Wittum, PhD; Amy K. Ferketich, PhD; Julie A. Funk, DVM, PhD; Päivi J. Rajala-Schultz, DVM, PhD

Objective—To characterize the process by which owners search for lost dogs and identify factors associated with time to recovery.

Design—Cross-sectional study.

Sample Population—Owners of 187 dogs lost in Montgomery County, Ohio, between June 1 and September 30, 2005.

Procedures—A telephone survey was conducted.

Results—132 of the 187 (71%) dogs were recovered; median time to recovery was 2 days (range, 0.5 to 21 days). Dogs were recovered primarily through a call or visit to an animal agency (46 [34.8%]), a dog license tag (24 [18.2%]), and posting of neighborhood signs (20 [15.2%]). Eighty-nine (48%) dogs had some type of identification at the time they were lost (ie, identification tag, dog license tag, rabies tag, or microchip). Owners had a higher likelihood of recovery when they called an animal agency (hazard ratio, 2.1), visited an animal agency (1.8), and posted neighborhood signs. Dogs that were wearing a dog license tag also had a higher likelihood of recovery (hazard ratio, 1.6). Owners were less likely to search for their dogs if they believed their dogs were stolen (hazard ratio, 0.3).

Conclusions and Clinical Relevance—Results suggest that various factors are associated with the likelihood that owners will recover a lost dog. Both animal agencies and veterinarians can play a role in educating dog owners on the importance of identification tags, licensing, and microchips and can help to emphasize the importance of having a search plan in case a dog is lost. (*J Am Vet Med Assoc* 2007;230:211–216)

Dogs and cats are enormously popular as companion animals in the United States. In 2002, it was estimated that 36% of American households owned dogs and 32% of American households owned cats.¹ Not only are dogs and cats popular, but their owners consider them part of the family. In the 2004 American Animal Hospital Association Pet Survey, 50% of respondents indicated they would choose a dog or cat as their sole companion if stranded on a desert island, and 56% said they would be very likely to risk their lives to save their pets.²

A pet that strays from its home can be at serious risk for starvation, injury, or death. Also, given the strength of the human-animal bond and the emotional attachment that many owners have to their pets, having a pet stray from its home can be traumatic and distressing for the owner. Thus, veterinarians may provide a benefit to both their patients and their clients by counseling pet owners on methods to prevent lost pets and effective means to ensure the rapid recovery of pets that do become lost. Traditionally, owners have identified

their pets with tags on the pets' collars and have placed advertisements in newspapers or searched local animal shelters to recover lost pets. Newer technology has led to the use of implanted microchip identification methods and Web sites devoted to finding and returning lost pets to their owners. However, the effectiveness of the various methods available for recovering lost pets has not been reported. The purposes of the study reported here were to characterize the process by which owners search for lost dogs and identify factors associated with time to recovery of lost dogs.

Materials and Methods

Location of study—The study was conducted in Montgomery County, Ohio, during 2005. At the time of the study, the county had approximately 550,000 residents,³ of which 160,000 resided in the city of Dayton,⁴ and a single major newspaper, the *Dayton Daily News*. At that time, each county in Ohio had a primary dog warden who was responsible for handling stray dogs,⁵ and dogs were required to wear a county dog license tag. The license tag had a number by which the county dog warden could identify the owner of the dog, and the county dog warden was required to hold all unlicensed stray dogs for 3 days and all licensed stray dogs for 14 days. Three major animal care and control agencies operated in Montgomery County at the time of the study: a dog warden agency that handled all stray dogs for the county as well as stray cats for some city municipalities, and 2 nonprofit humane societies that handled cats and owner-surrendered dogs and received reports

From the Department of Veterinary Preventive Medicine, College of Veterinary Medicine (Lord, Wittum, Rajala-Schultz), and the School of Public Health (Ferketich), The Ohio State University, Columbus, OH 43210; and the National Food Safety and Toxicology Center, 165 Food Safety and Toxicology Building, East Lansing, MI 48824-1302 (Funk).

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Address correspondence to Dr. Lord.

Consistent results

Search Methods Used to Locate Missing Cats and Locations Where Missing Cats Are Found

Liyan Huang¹, Marcia Coradini^{1,*}, Jacquie Rand^{1,2}, John Morton³, Kat Albrecht⁴,
Brigid Wasson⁴ and Danielle Robertson⁴

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² Australian Pet Welfare Foundation, Kenmore, Queensland 4069, Australia; jacquie@petwelfare.org.au

³ Jemora Pty Ltd., Geelong, Victoria 3220, Australia, john.morton@optusnet.com.au

⁴ Missing Pet Partnership, Cloverdale, CA 6105, USA; info@katalbrecht.com (K.A.); bwasson@missingpetpartnership.org (B.W.); danielle@lostpetresearch.com (D.R.)

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“Of the cats that were found alive, the vast majority were found outside (83%). This was followed by the option offered as ‘cat being found inside someone else’s house’ (11%), **inside the house where they lived (4%)**, and inside a public building (2%), therefore **less than 2% of found cats were in a shelter or municipal animal facility.**”

Above all, do no harm

Change for the Better in Chico

California shelter strikes gold by limiting cat intake

Animal Sheltering magazine, Mar/Apr 2015



Tracy Mohr, animal services manager for Chico, Calif., says the community supports the shelter's policy of accepting only the neediest cats. Carolyn Pickard/Chico Police Department

“People **no longer** could use the shelter as the **“Easy Button”** – a place to drop off cats without trying to find their own solutions to the problem, sometimes of their own making...**The old answer would have been: set traps and animal control will go out and pick up the cats. This option has been eliminated. Now we have a conversation...our job is to help facilitate the public to engage in the desired behavior** which could be **TNR or helping a neighbor with TNR, not feeding their pets outside** which could be attracting cats, **making their yard unattractive** to cats in various ways, **having a stray cat scanned for a microchip, advertising a found cat on Craigslist, etc.”**

Equity issue

- 1 in 6 people in America live in poverty
- 1 in 5 people in America speak a language other than English at home
- Cultural norms and expectations as well as access to services can vary
- > 90% of people in underserved communities have never been to a shelter at all

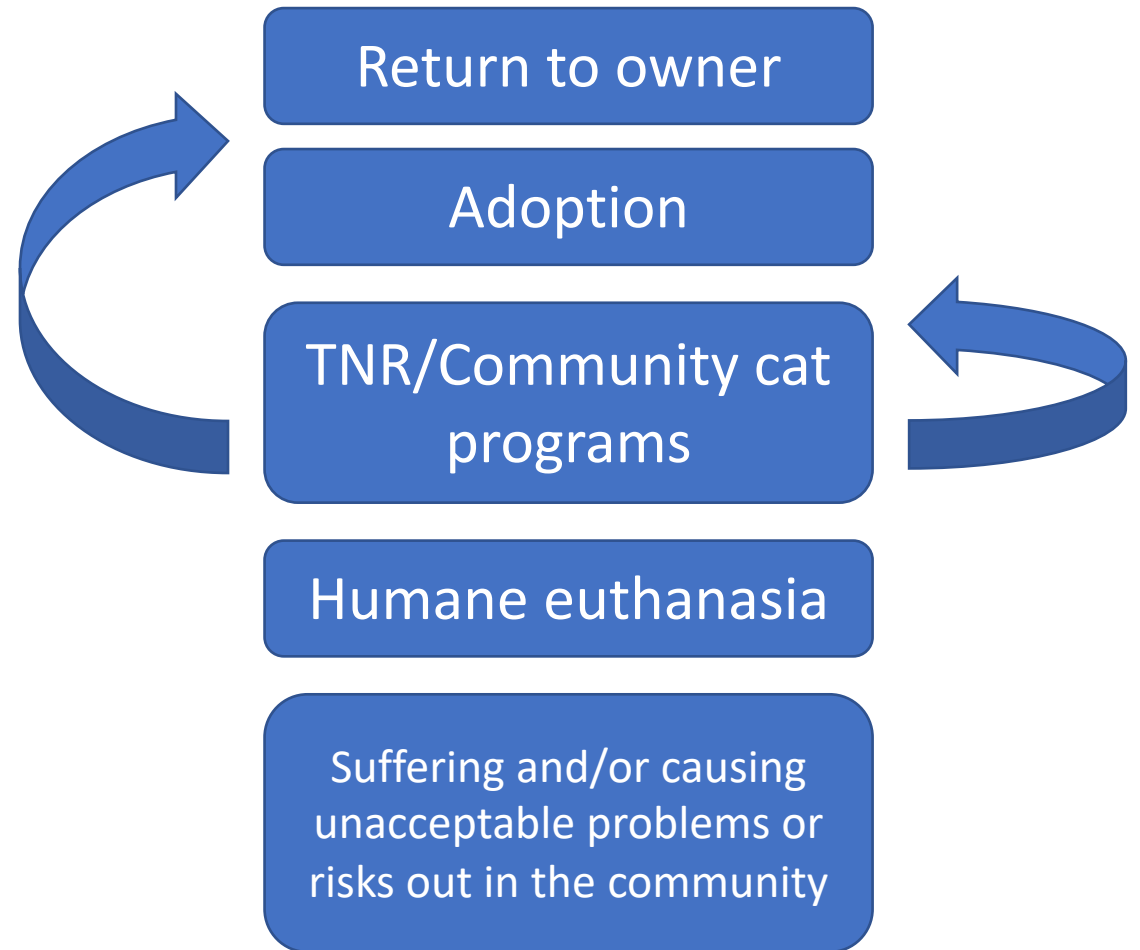


Reunion!

- Leaving healthy cats in place and encouraging neighborhood-based reunions bypasses transportation, language and cultural barriers to reclaim
- Spay/neuter/vaccination is a bonus that improves cat health and decreases roaming for cats whose owners might not have the wherewithal to bring them in for those services



New understanding



New
understanding

Animal Control Intake of Free-Roaming Cats



*The National Animal Care & Control Association
is committed to setting the standard of professionalism in animal welfare
and public safety through training, networking, and advocacy.*

Animal Control Intake of Free-Roaming Cats

It is the position [policy] of the National Animal Care & Control Association that, at every opportunity, officers should [will] work to educate the public regarding humane and responsible co-existence and care of

pet and cor
vaccination
and effectiv
It is the pos
of tempera
animal ma
should be

It is the position of NACA that **indiscriminate** pick up or admission of **healthy, free-roaming cats, regardless of temperament, for any purpose other than TNR/SNR, fails to serve commonly held goals** of community animal management and protection programs and, as such, is a misuse of time and public funds and should be avoided.

Thoughtful intake

- Unhealthy/exigent risk
- Large group/significant nuisance or public health risk
- Critical location
- Evidence of abandonment or truly lost
- Owner crisis



What about kittens?



Remember this

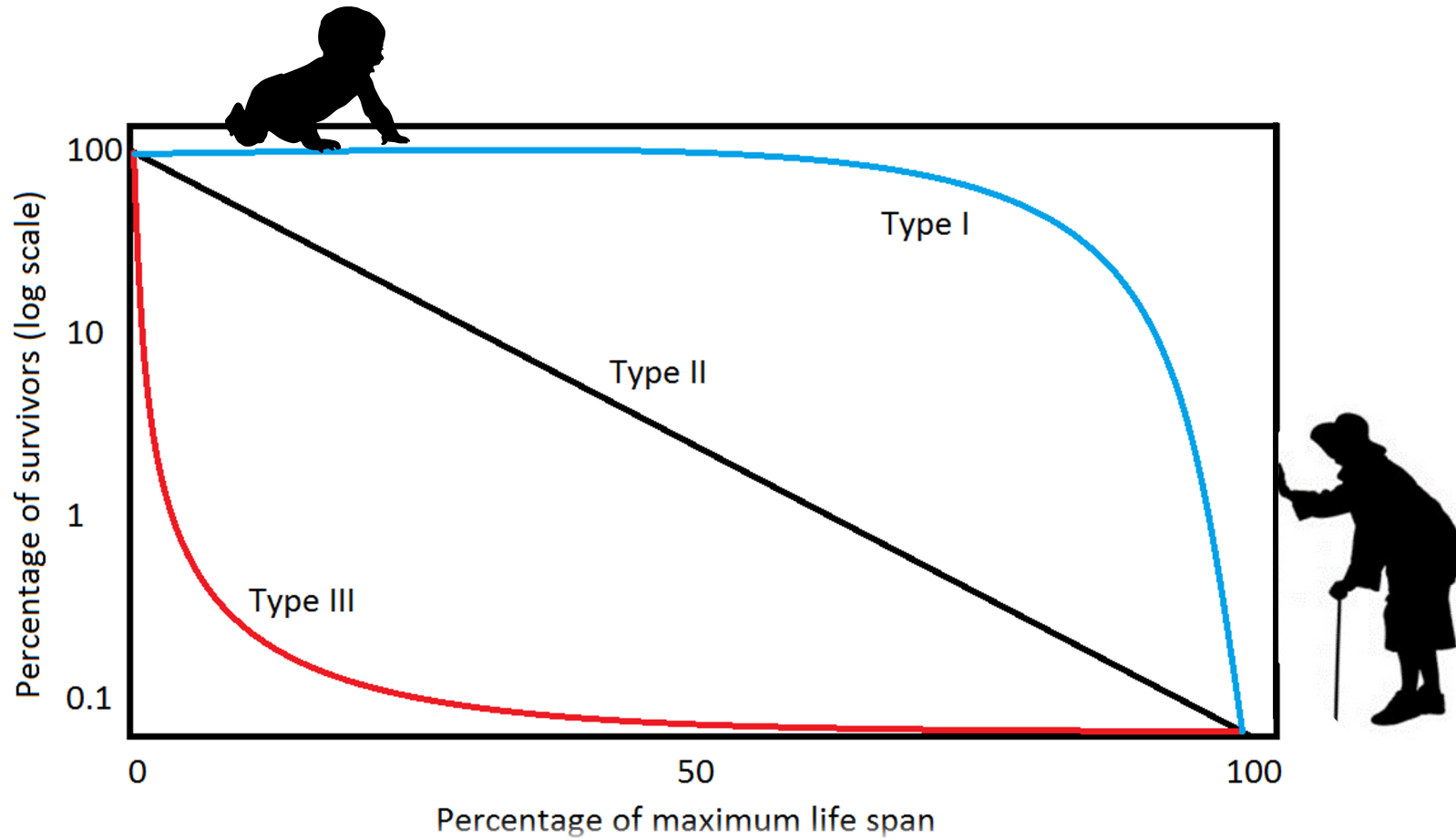
MILLIONS OF CATS



Cats in the U.S.

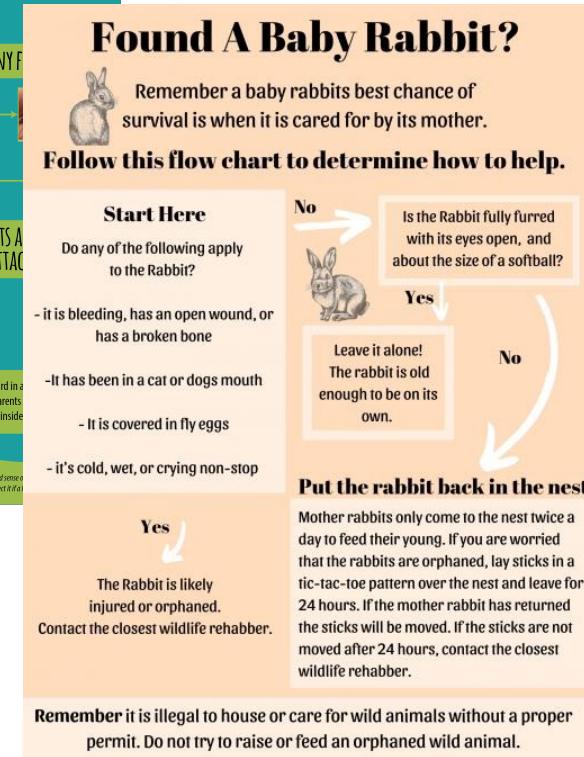
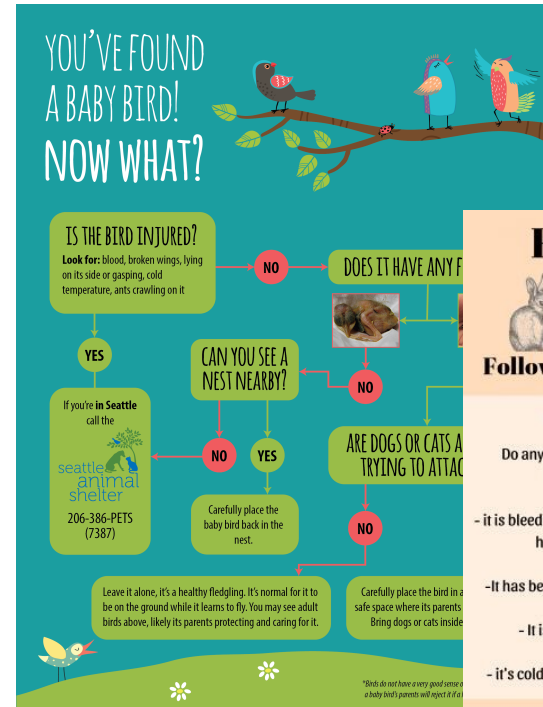
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 - ~ 60% indoors
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- 30K – 80M community cats
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Reproductive strategies

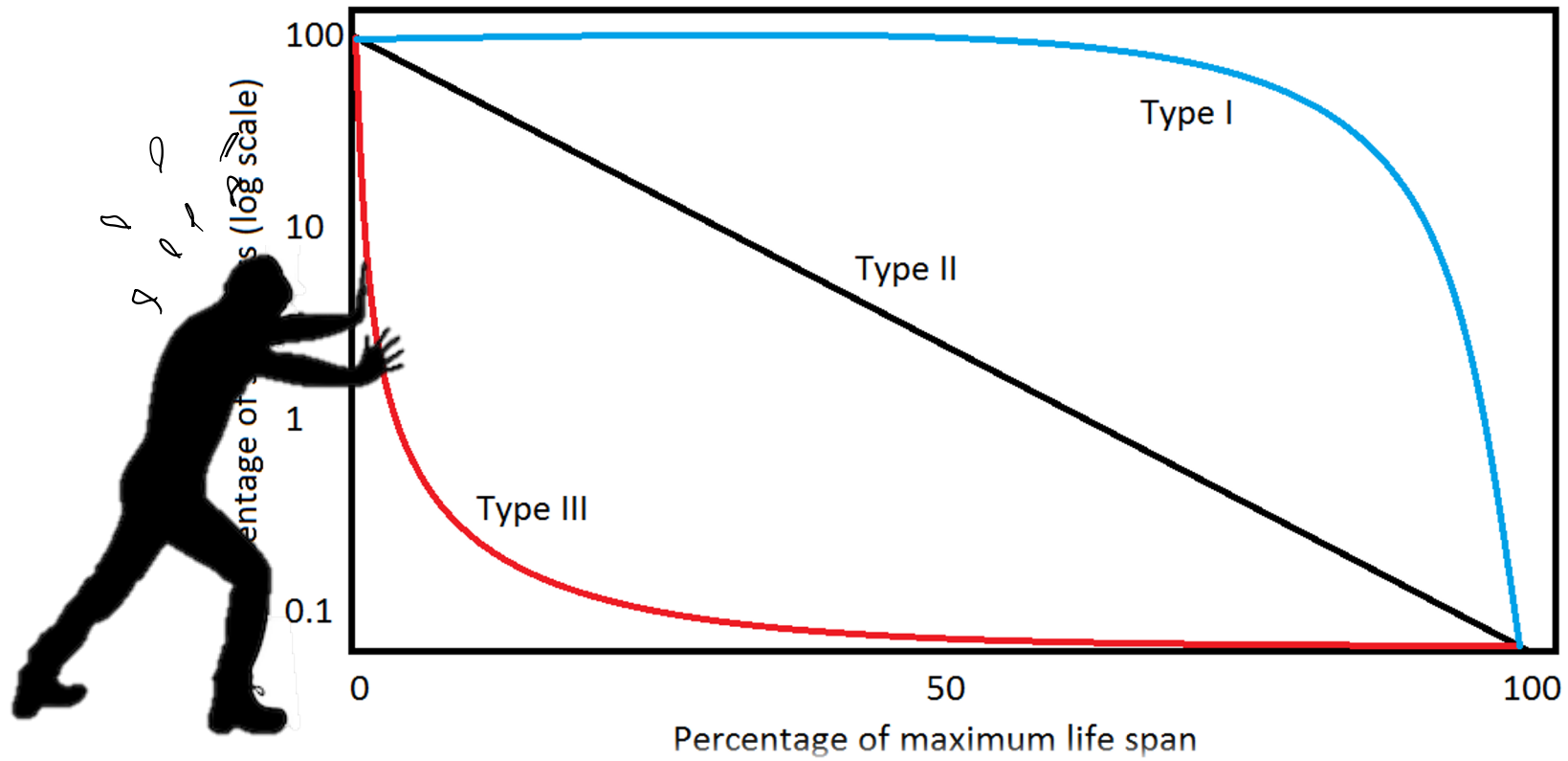


Relevant parallel

- Assess for injury/illness
- Leave healthy babies in place
- Link to resources
- Intervene *only when needed*



How do we bend this curve?



Strategic investment

A Long-Term Lens: Cumulative Impacts of Free-Roaming Cat Management Strategy and Intensity on Preventable Cat Mortalities

 John D. Boone^{1*},  Philip S. Miller²,  Joyce R. Briggs³,  Valerie A. W. Benka³,  Dennis F. Lawler⁴,  Margaret Slater⁵,
 Julie K. Levy⁶ and  Stephen Zawistowski⁷

¹Great Basin Bird Observatory, Reno, NV, United States

²Conservation Planning Specialist Group, Species Survival Commission, International Union for Conservation of Nature, Apple Valley, MN, United States

³Alliance for Contraception in Cats and Dogs, Portland, OR, United States

⁴Illinois State Museum, Springfield, IL, United States

⁵Strategy and Research Department, American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, Florence, MA, United States

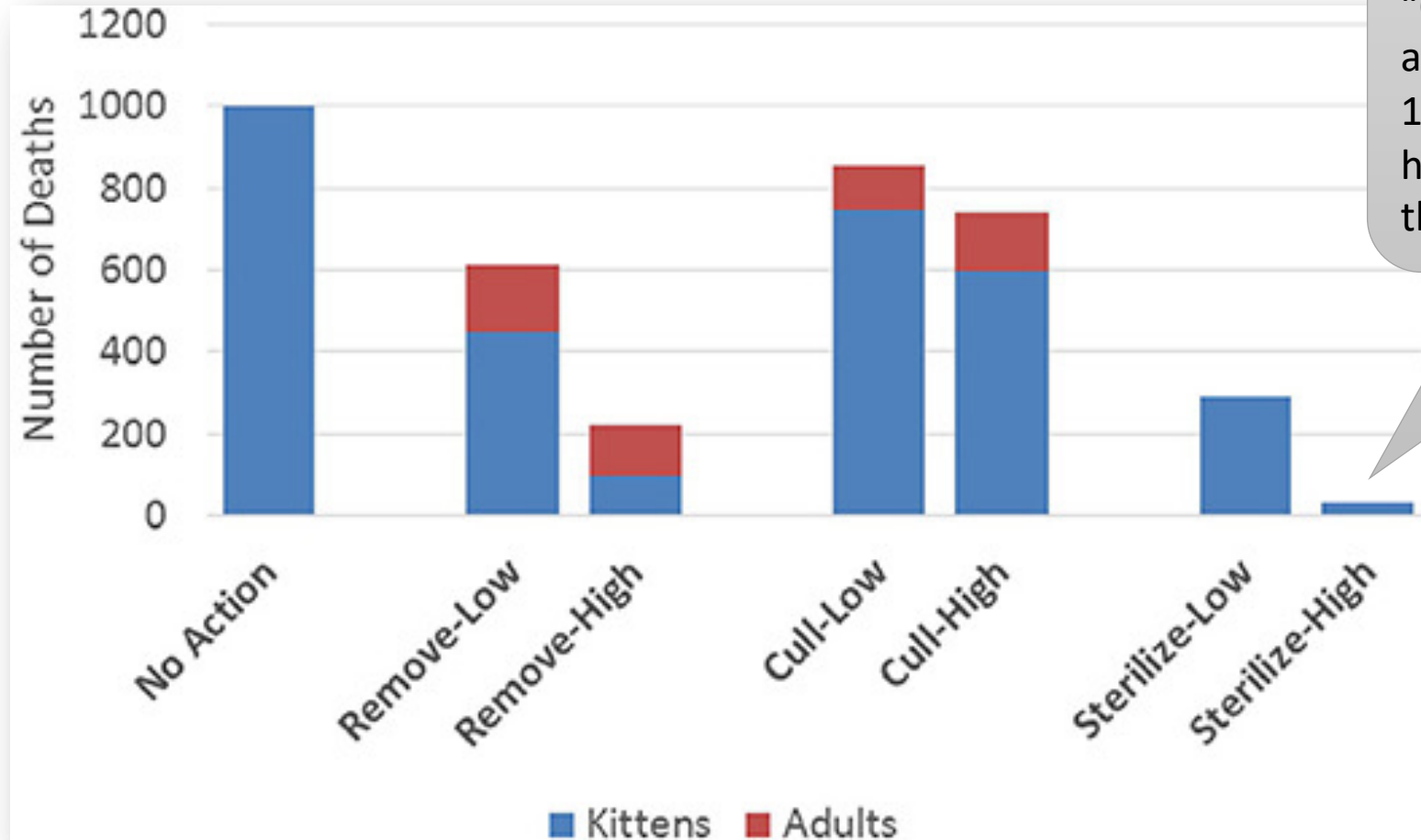
⁶Maddie's Shelter Medicine Program, Department of Small Animal Clinical Sciences, University of Florida, Gainesville, FL, United States

⁷Animal Behavior and Conservation Program, Hunter College, New York, NY, United States

This study used a previously developed stochastic simulation model (1) to estimate the impact of different management actions on free-roaming kitten and cat mortality over a 10-year period. These longer-term cumulative impacts have not been systematically examined to date. We examined seven management scenarios, including (1) no action, (2) low-intensity removal, (3) high-intensity removal, (4) low-intensity trap-neuter-return (TNR), (5) medium-intensity TNR, (6) high-intensity TNR, and (7) high-intensity TNR with lethal management. We defined preventable deaths as those that could likely be reduced or eliminated using an alternative population management approach, specifically ***the deaths of kittens under six months*** that fail to reach adulthood, and the deaths of adult cats due to lethal management.

We define preventable deaths as those that could likely be reduced or eliminated using an alternative population management approach, specifically ***the deaths of kittens under six months*** that fail to reach adulthood, and the deaths of adult cats due to lethal management.

And the winner is...

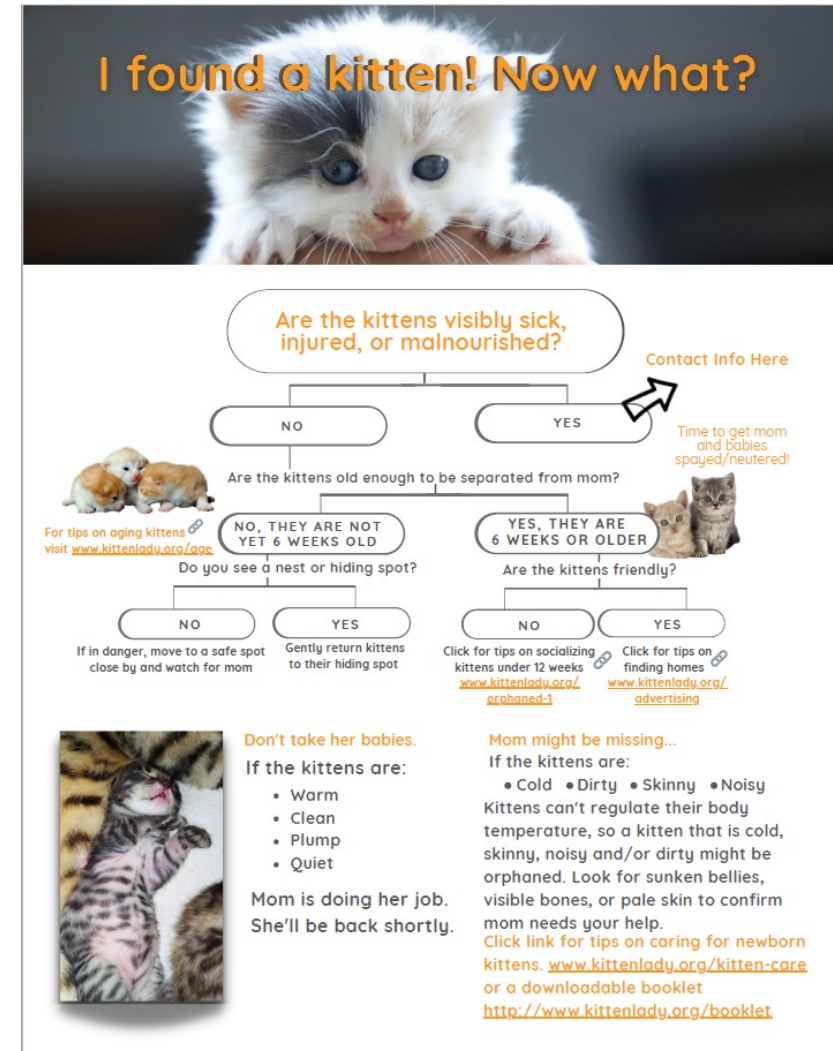


“Cumulative preventable deaths and cumulative kitten deaths over 10 years are much lower for higher-intensity sterilization (TNR) than for all other scenarios.”

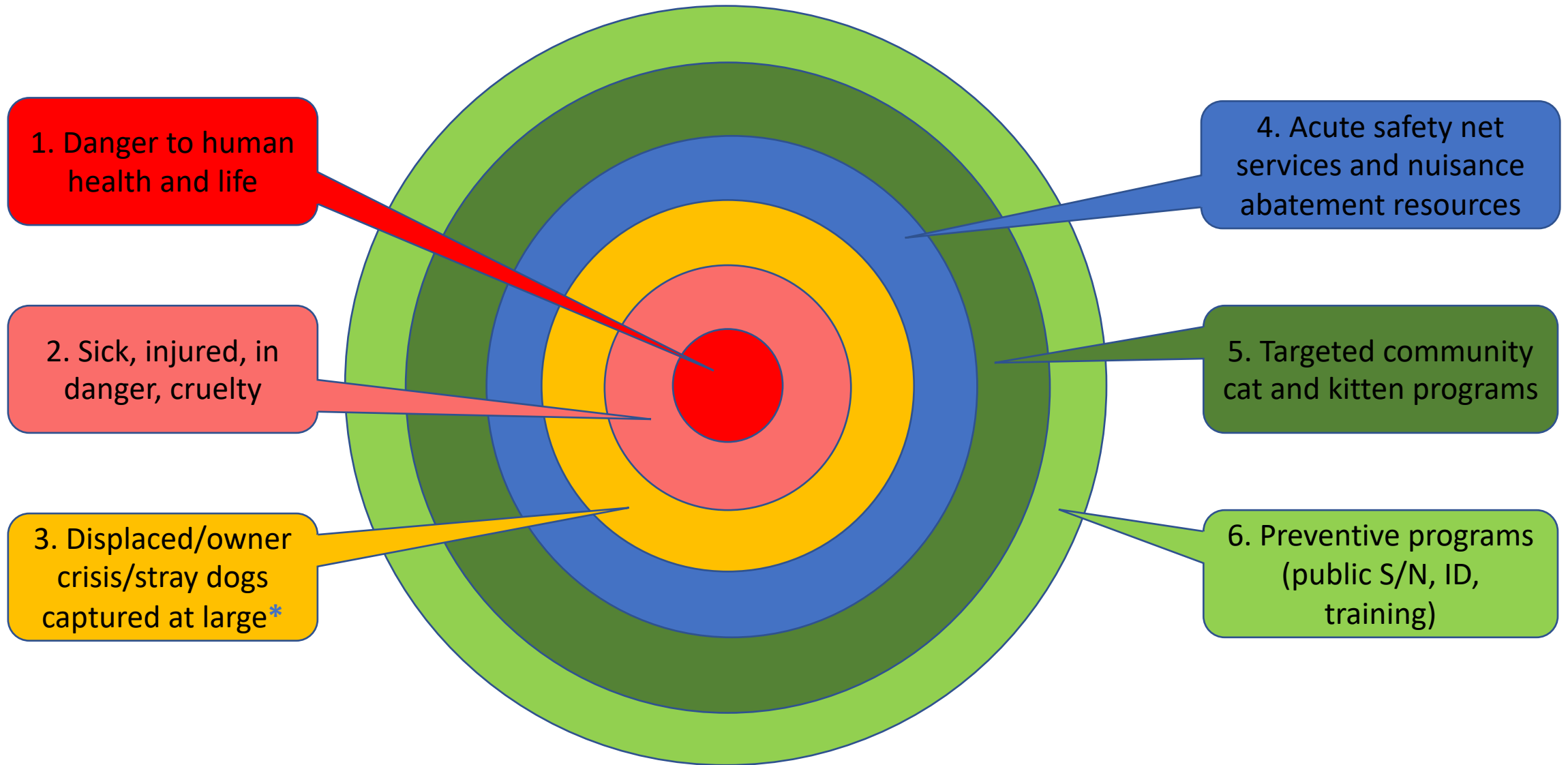


Kitten triage

- Healthy un-weaned – link out to resources (Kitten Lady is great!)
- Sick/injured/imminent danger – admit and assess
- Reserve shelter foster for inevitable sick/injured/abandoned babies
- Provide shelter support for spay/neuter/adoption of weaned kittens



Public shelter priorities

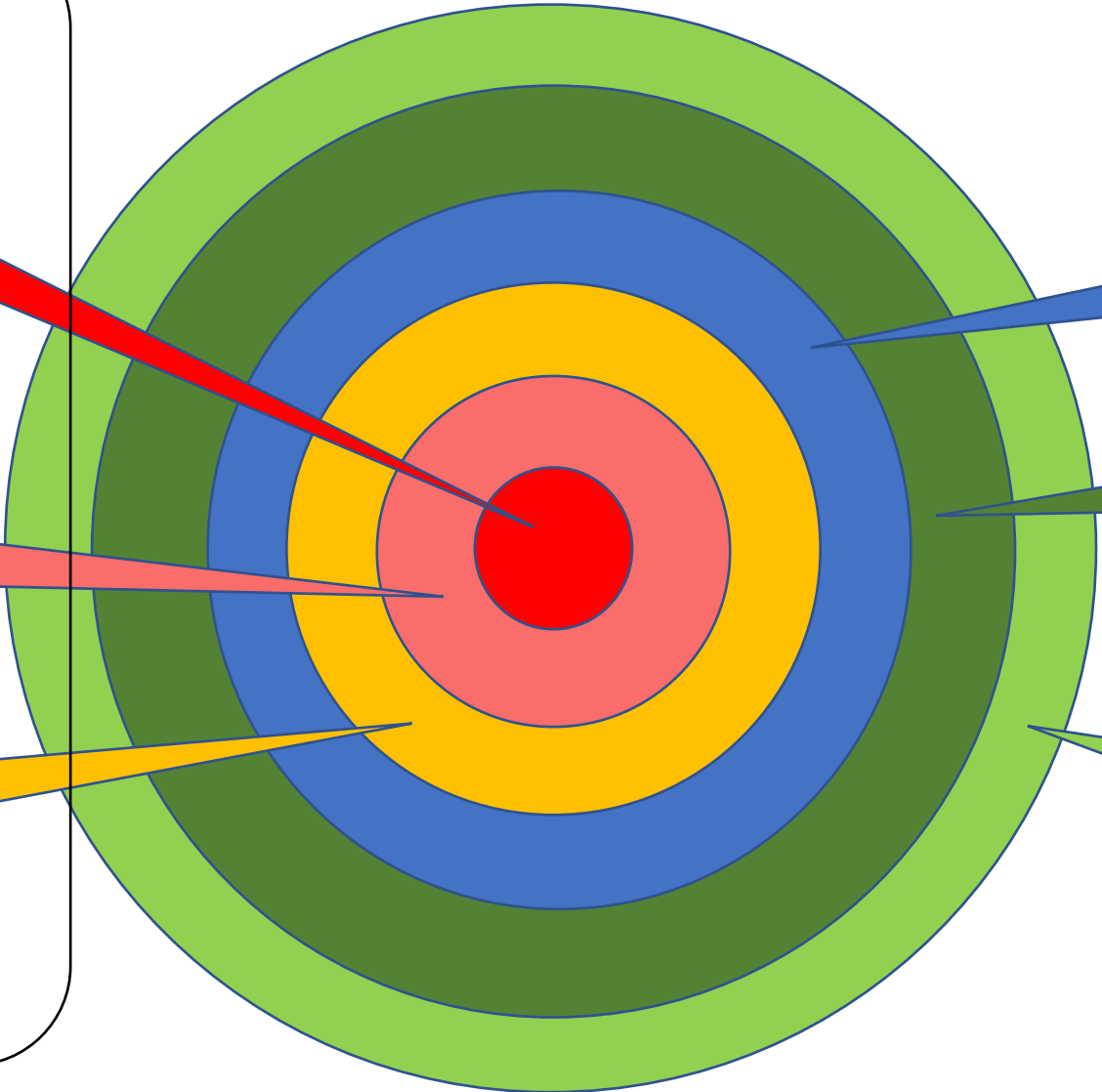


**OBLIGATION/
ENSURE CAPACITY♥**

Danger to human health and life

Sick, injured, in danger, cruelty

Displaced/owner crisis/stray dogs captured at large*




**PUBLIC/PRIVATE
PARTNERSHIP**

Acute safety net services and nuisance abatement resources

Targeted community cat and kitten programs

Preventive programs (public S/N, ID, training)

Additional factor

 American Veterinary Medical Association

Are we in a veterinary workforce crisis? | American

This has led to concerns voiced about a shortage of veterinary personnel and a workforce crisis. While it's true that demand for veterinary ...

1 week ago



 WTTV

Burnout fuels shortage in veterinary support positions, animal clinics working to still provide care

While the need is there, help is hard to come by. That's as animal clinics try are battling shortages in veterinary support staff ...



 KTLA

SoCal pet owners struggle to get appointments with veterinarians amid shortage

That's because there is a veterinarian shortage in the greater Los Angeles area, paired with increased pet adoptions during the pandemic.

2 weeks ago



 Q13 FOX

Vet clinics forced to reduce hours and services due to worker shortages

- Veterinary clinics have had to reduce hours and services across Washington due to the shortage of veterinarians and licensed technicians, and ...

1 month ago



Shelter medical team triage

